

A human being is a relational being. We are not designed to live isolated lives. For a person to develop appropriately he or she *needs* people. It may be possible to develop your gifts and talents in isolation but to develop character, which is in essence the real you, you must to be a part of a human community.

We are all peculiar. No other person is exactly like you. You have your interests and disinterests, likes and dislikes, good and not-so-good. If you are left on your own your peculiarities will tilt your life to the extreme on one direction. It is like our solar system. The sun pulls on the planets and the planets pull away while at the same time pulling on each other. This keeps them moving in the right orbit. So, other peculiar people bring balance and stability to your life.

If we were designed to be relational beings, what then happens when we are angry with another person? When we relate with others there is always a chance of annoying each other in many ways. What happens when those times of annoyance lead to deep anger? How do we continue to communicate in a way that does not dig the wounds deeper? Note that the following steps I will expound to you were designed for normal relationships between human beings. If you are in an abusive relationship, one characterised by insults, physical attacks and emotional battering, I suggest you be careful using these steps or don't use them completely. My advice for people in abusive relationships is to find ways of breaking free from the bondage such relationships

represent. If on the other hand your relationships are healthy ones, follow these steps in communicating when you are angry.

1. **Understand that soft answers quell tension.** When people are angry they tend to raise their voices and communicate with harsh words. This is a natural response to either defend yourself or inflict pain on the person you are communicating with. Rather than remain on this shallow level of communication, note that it is possible to change this pattern of using harsh words. Let me give you an example:

Woman: are you stupid?

Man: you are the one who is stupid!

Woman: Can you imagine? Do you know who I am?

Man: who the hell do you think you are? I will show you my... (fade)

This is one way people communicate. Let us try a different pattern in which one person involved uses soft words instead of the harsh words triggered by the other person.

Woman: are you stupid?

Man: I don't think it has gotten to that. I just want you to understand my views.

Woman: Can you imagine? Do you know who I am?

Man: I am sorry if you felt insulted but my intentions were to... (fade)

It is obvious that in the second example, there is a chance of quelling the tension that has been raised more and faster than in the first case.

- 2. Find the Right Time.** If you are angry about something and you would like to have a serious conversation about it, make sure you pick the right time to talk. Don't interrupt the other person when they're watching a football game, TV show, about to go to sleep or stressed about an upcoming test. Tell the other person you would like to talk later and find a time when you're in the same room and not doing anything important. Don't start serious conversations in public places unless you feel safe.
- 3. Plan to listen.** Nature instructs us in the art of effective communication. We often ignore the fact that we have two ears but only one mouth. More often than not we try to understand people by out talking them. This does far more harm than the intended good. It sometimes makes the other person feel like they aren't important and their view don't matter in the issue discussed. Talking before you are willing to listen and talking without giving an opportunity to understand the other person is a sure way of getting more angry, losing the other person, or even both.
- 4. Talk Face to Face.** Avoid talking about serious matters or issues in writing or via phone calls unless no other option is available for you.

Text messages, letters and emails can be misinterpreted. Talk in person so there aren't any unnecessary miscommunications.

5. Do Not Attack. Even when we mean well, we can sometimes come across as harsh because of our word choice. Using "you" can sound like you're attacking, which will make your partner defensive and less receptive to your message. Instead, try using "I" or "we." For example, say "I feel like we haven't been as close lately" instead of "You have been distant with me."

6. Be Honest. Agree to be honest. Sometimes the truth hurts, but it's the key to a healthy communication and relationships. Admit that you aren't always perfect and apologize when you make a mistake instead of making excuses. You will feel better and it will help strengthen your relationship.

7. Check Your Body Language. Make eye contact when speaking. Sit up and face your partner. Let your partner know you're listening. Show them you really care. Don't take a phone call, text or play a video game when you're talking. Listen and respond.

8. Use the 48 Hour Rule. If your partner does something that makes you angry, you need to tell them about it. But you don't have to do so right away. If you're still hurt 48 hours later, say something. If not, consider forgetting about it. But remember your partner can't read your mind. If you don't speak up when you're upset, there is no way for them to apologize or change. Once you do mention your hurt

feelings and your partner sincerely apologies, let it go. Don't bring up past issues if they're not relevant.